



# M E D I A   R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **TENNESSEE SUBMITS RACE TO THE TOP PLAN** *REFORM PROPOSAL SEEKS \$502 MILLION FOR VOLUNTEER STATE*

Nashville, TN –The State of Tennessee has submitted its proposal in the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top competition, seeking a total of \$501.8 million in federal resources to spur education innovation across the Volunteer State.

Tennessee's final request exceeded recent estimates by about \$17 million, mainly due to additional resources that are being sought for turnaround schools. Tennessee's complete Race to the Top proposal, totaling 1,111 pages with supporting documents, can be found on the state Department of Education Web site at [www.tn.gov/education](http://www.tn.gov/education).

"We're proud to put forward Tennessee's very best proposal for meaningful reform in public education," said Governor Phil Bredesen. "Our application should be especially competitive following last week's efforts by the General Assembly, the Tennessee Education Association and countless others who helped support and pass the Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010."

The Governor signed the newly minted law on Saturday. He added: "With years of solid reform work under our belts, we're optimistic that the U.S. Department of Education will view Tennessee in the same way we see ourselves: As a state that is ready to lead the nation with fresh ideas and a new approach to public education."

Under federal guidelines, half of any Race to the Top funds received by Tennessee — which, as requested, would total \$250.9 million — would be distributed directly to local school districts under the federal government's existing Title I formula. The other half would be used to seed a "State Innovation Fund" underwriting a series of new investments over a four-year period. Major categories include:

- **Turnaround schools:** Approximately \$108.8 million to help turn around struggling schools — including roughly a dozen consistently failing schools that may join the new state-run "Achievement School District" as well as roughly 180 increasingly troubled schools that may be designated as "Renewal" or "Focus" schools.
- **Great teachers and leaders:** Approximately \$62.2 million for a range of professional-development and "human capital" initiatives — including the creation of a new educator leadership program; expansion of Tennessee's existing SITES-M program to improve math instruction in elementary schools; and training for teachers on higher academic standards.

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- **Technology and data:** \$54.5 million to improve public school teachers' use of and access to Tennessee's longitudinal data system used for tracking "student growth," or a child's improvement in the classroom over time.
- **STEM programs:** \$22.5 million to invest in programs and schools focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math — the STEM disciplines.
- **Oversight and implementation:** \$2.9 million to help the Department of Education implement Tennessee's plan and to establish a "First to the Top Oversight Team" charged with ensuring that funds are deployed according to plan and properly utilized.

"Tennessee's proposed investments under Race to the Top are aligned not only with the needs of our state but also with the core reform priorities outlined by President and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan," said Timothy Webb, commissioner of the state Department of Education. "We're hopeful that Tennessee's will come out on top."

Created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Race to the Top provides \$4.35 billion in competitive grants designed to encourage and reward states that are implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
4. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

On Tuesday, the President and Secretary Duncan announced plans to seek an additional \$1.35 billion in funding for Race to the Top in anticipation of an "overwhelming response" from states seeking awards this week, in the first round of the competition. Winning states in the first round are expected to be announced in April, to be followed by a second round of competition later in the year.

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